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**February 13, 2012**

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### **New Tool Streamlines Welfare-to-Work Time and Attendance Reporting**

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has launched a new web-based tool that will make it easier to track whether recipients of Ohio Works First cash assistance are meeting their work requirements.

“In the past, counties used many different systems for time and attendance reporting, many of which were paper-based,” said ODJFS Director Michael Colbert. “Now, they can use the same easy-to-use, web-based system. This will make it easier to give those with assigned work activities credit for that work, and ease the administrative burden for county agencies.”

Ohio Works First is the financial assistance portion of the state’s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, which provides cash benefits to needy families for up to 36 months. Federal law requires most able-bodied adults enrolled in TANF cash assistance programs to work at least 30 hours a week. States must show that at least 90 percent of adults in two-parent households and at least 50 percent of all adults are working the required number of hours. Potentially allowable work activities include on-the-job training, community service and education directly related to employment.

Last fall, Ohio received federal approval for a corrective compliance plan to bring its cash assistance program into line with these work requirements, avoid more than \$130 million in federal penalties, and put more Ohioans back to work. The web-based time and attendance tool was one component of this plan. Supervisors simply enter the participant’s attendance online, and the information is automatically sent to the appropriate county department of job and family services for review and posting into the statewide eligibility system.

Other components of Ohio’s corrective compliance plan also are being implemented. For example, all Ohio Works First applicants now must complete a self-sufficiency assessment before receiving their initial assistance checks. Additional hearing officers are being hired to ensure timely hearings for those who have been sanctioned for failing to meet work participation requirements. ODJFS also has launched Ohio Works Now, a temporary program that provides a small additional food assistance benefit to eligible working families with children, allowing those families to be counted in the state’s work participation rate.

In January ODJFS launched a statewide radio and television campaign to educate cash assistance beneficiaries about their work requirement. The public service announcement can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/sd7O0s>.

ODJFS has already improved the state’s work participation rate from 22.3 percent in January 2010 to 36.5 percent in December 2011.

Ohio Works First provides a monthly cash benefit to about 193,000 Ohioans. All earn no more than 50 percent of the federal poverty level, and all have children. Many earn less than \$7,000 a year.

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